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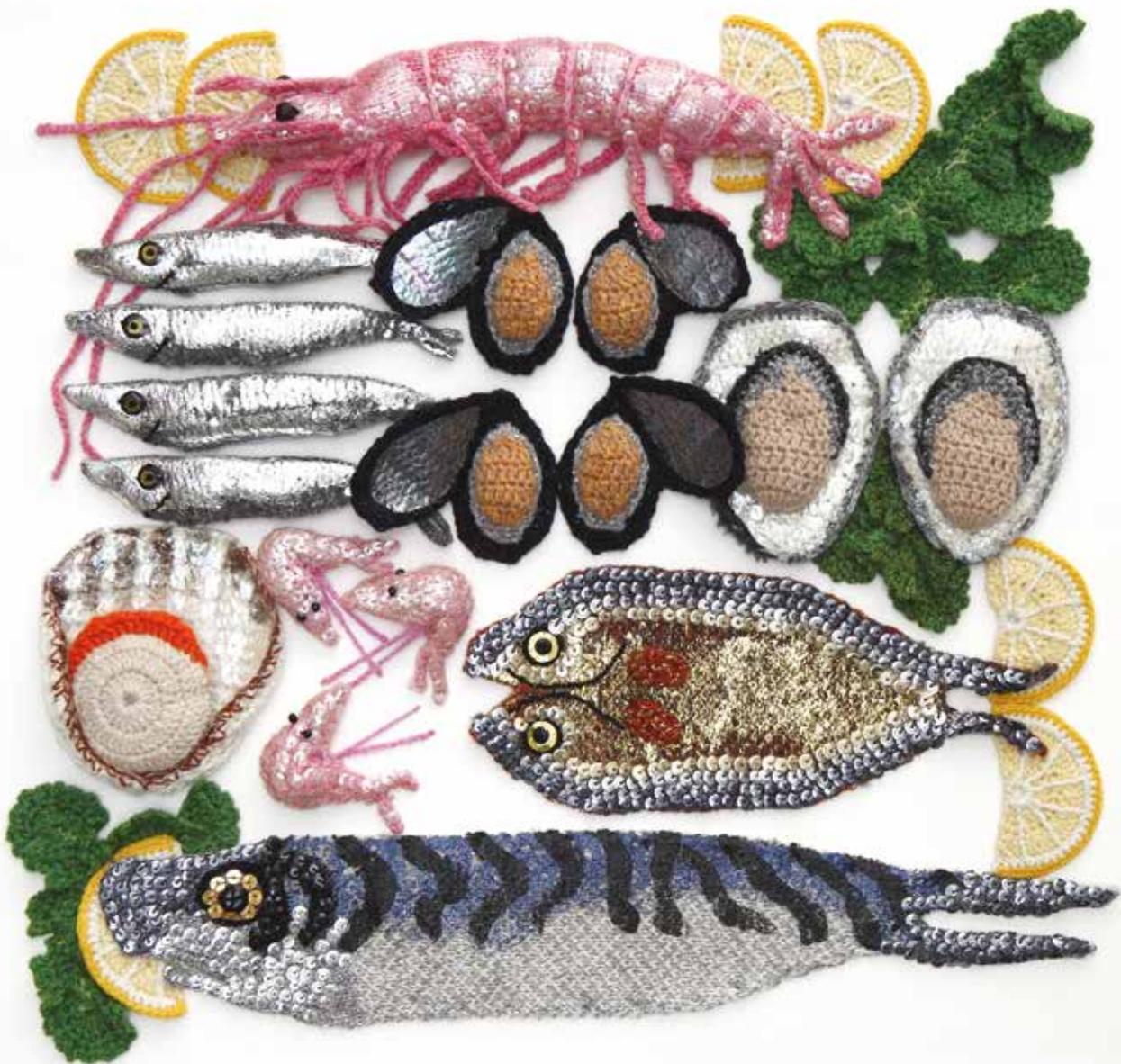
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Food Focus

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Food *for* thought

Brighton-based artist Kate Jenkins' knitted artwork is a firm favourite on Viking ships. She tells **Kate Finney** more about her food-inspired creations



Clockwise, from facing page
 Kate Jenkins at work in her Brighton studio; Sardines on Toast, an original artwork by Kate Jenkins.

PORTRAIT: © ALUN CALLENDER. PHOTOS: © EMMA WOOD

How did you start knitting and crocheting food?

I was actually making fashion accessories when I decided to knit a full English breakfast and people loved it so much, as I found I was good at making things look realistic. In essence, wanted to stand out and grab people's attention and it's ended up taking me down a whole new career path.

What's the biggest thing you've made?

I knitted an entire fish counter from scratch – it was massive! I had the idea in my head, and visited different fish markets all over the world – like those in Tokyo, Copenhagen, and Billingsgate in London – for inspiration. It was an interactive exhibition so I was dressed as a fishmonger, and people could come to buy a piece from the fish counter, which we would subsequently frame on plates. I made lobster, cockles, salmon, flat fish, plaice, kippers... everything

you would usually see. People were really doing a double take, it looked so real.

At the other end of the scale, tins of sardines are popular, and sushi, too. I've made variations on Scandinavian open sandwiches featuring lots of prawns. It takes about an hour to knit a prawn or a sardine, and then I embellish them with sequins and beads.

How did your partnership with Viking come about?

The company got in touch with me after seeing my work in a gallery on Charlotte Street in London. It took a year or two to get the go-ahead but my work is now featured on three ships, and I'm working on pieces for the fourth, the new ocean ship, *Viking Sun*. I love that my work is floating around the world! And that people are eating their breakfast looking at crocheted versions of their food!



So many people commission me after seeing my work on board, so it's been a really interesting collaboration. One Viking customer from New York commissioned me to make a crocheted, hand-embroidered Mahjong set of playing tiles for his wife for Valentine's Day. I'd never done them before, but I loved it. I like to think my work inspires people to think of creating a personal, one-of-a-kind piece of art.

You love to travel, but how do your trips inspire your work?

I'm always looking for places to source sequins – India is amazing for that. I can't even begin to guess how many different sequins I use! I have a huge range of metallic, opalescent, and iridescent sequins for fish scales. And so much yarn as well! Japan is great for beads – the caviar I create for my canapes is made from

black beads from Japan, and I also have the perfect beads to make a pinky-red fish roe.

What kind of food inspires you most?

I turned vegetarian this year – but I haven't stopped making fish! I'm now obsessed with vegetables and cheese; I can't stop thinking about how to make feta cheese look interesting! It probably needs a Greek salad... I'm good at tomatoes and cucumber, so I'm nearly there! I'm inspired by food from all over the world, so I'm thinking of "around the world in 80 dishes" as an exhibition theme.

How did you learn to knit so well?

My mum and my grandmother were always knitting and making things for me and my sister when I was growing up. We were always encouraged to make

things as children, and we lived in the Rhymney Valley in South Wales.

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm currently working on pieces for one of the newest Viking ships, *Viking Orion*. I'm making crab and chilli linguine, a bouillabaisse that I have renamed "woolabaisse", a lobster bisque, cocktails and canapes, seafood spaghetti and a Scandinavian open sandwich. Last year, I created a range of Christmas decorations for the fashion and homewares store Anthropologie. I made a 'fishmas tree', a lobster holding mistletoe in his pincers, and a skewer of prawns which I called 'We Three King Prawns'.

I love food and I really enjoy cooking, but I think I prefer knitting it to cooking it

I'm now working on my next exhibition which is opening in November in New York. I'll be creating a knitted and crocheted record store. I love random requests because they take me out of my comfort

zone. For example, I've been embroidering muscles for a ski company, to illustrate parts of the body you use while skiing!

Do you prefer to cook your food or crochet it?!

I love food and I really enjoy cooking, but I think I prefer knitting it to cooking it...Cooking always seems so time-consuming in comparison to knitting! But I guess they are both a labour of love! ♥

katejenkinsstudio.co.uk

See Kate's work onboard all the Viking ocean ships.

Clockwise, from facing page:

The incredible fish counter created by Kate Jenkins for an exhibition; artwork on display onboard the Viking Sea; Cocktails and Canapes, Sardines on Toast, and Knitnoise Salad.